

SESSION 22: LOOKING OVER A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

OBJECTIVES:

1. Participants will develop questions to answer about a community resource.
2. Participants will visit a community resource that specializes in serving gay and lesbian runaway adolescents.
3. Participants will develop linkages with the community agency.
4. Participants will acquire knowledge about other available community resources.

RATIONALE:

Community resources must be in place to facilitate the desired behavior—safer sex practices. From research around teenage pregnancy and drug and smoking prevention, it is known that coordinating services for youth is critical. These youth often rely heavily on peers rather than adults for obtaining information and other forms of support, partly because these other sources of support are unavailable to them.

The youths served in this training program need a variety of resources providing counseling, health care, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, legal aid, advice on how to take the G.E.D. exam, help in enrolling in athletic programs, and housing. To access these services, adolescents also need to become more self-directed, responsible consumers. To meet this objective adolescents require more than discussion of where these services can be obtained. They need to be taken to community agencies and centers where they can personally meet staff persons and consumers and where they can become familiar with different sites and their services. Also it must be remembered that many local resources are not sensitive to nor capable of serving the needs of gay and lesbian youth.

The stabilization and integration of community social services for youth may be the single best predictor of safer sex and drug use behavior. Therefore, it is essential that HIV/AIDS prevention programs establish strong working links between different social service agencies at both the leadership and staff levels. Without such links effective case management cannot be accomplished.

PROCEDURES:

1. Brief the group members and have them develop questions to ask at the agency. Check feeling levels. Tokens for developing the questions.
2. Introduce the agency staff and consumers to the group members.
3. Have the staff and consumers describe the agency and what it is like to use their services. Have group members ask questions.
4. Have the agency describe other community resources used by its consumers and how to access them.
5. Eat an informal meal together.
6. Discuss how to follow-up and specific plans for coming back. Also have the group members express their appreciation for the visit.
7. De-brief the visit with your group members alone. Have them discuss what they liked. Check feeling levels. Tokens for comments made about the agency.

MATERIALS:

Tokens
Directions to agency
Agency handout on services
Agency handout on other community resources

Establish Agency Linkages

Select an agency that provides case management services to gay and lesbian runaway youth. Have the leadership of both your organization and the case management agency establish a formal linkage which facilitates your adolescents becoming consumers at that agency.

Prepare for a Visit to the Case Management Agency

Arrange for your adolescents to visit the case management agency. Set up the following format: At the agency have both staff and consumers present what services are available and what it is like to be served there. Have consumers from their agency be paired with your group members in touring the agency and its services. Have the agency do a presentation on other community services and how to access them. Have a meal served at the agency where consumers and staff can talk with your adolescents in an informal manner. Develop a follow-up mechanism whereby your adolescents will be invited back to the agency and feedback will be given to you on who returns.

Exercise 1: What Should We Look for at this Agency

On the day of the visit meet briefly with your group members and have them discuss what they would like to see in an agency that served them. Have them develop a short list of questions they want answered. For example, confidentiality may be a concern that needs addressing. If the agency is new at serving gay and lesbian youth, the group may want to focus on that issue. Give out tokens for questions they want answered. Ask the group members how they are feeling on the Feeling Thermometer. Discuss feelings.

Exercise 2: Introductions

At the agency have your group members personally introduced to the staff and consumers there. Have individual consumers at the agency act as host to each of your group members.

Exercise 3: What Is the Agency Like

Have the agency's staff and consumers explain the available services, what it is like being a consumer there, and how services can be accessed. Give your group members the opportunity to ask questions.

Exercise 4: What Are Other Local Resources

Have agency staff present the other local resources that are available to their members. Handout list which describe the resources and how to access them. Hotline numbers should be included, as well as where free condoms are available.

Exercise 5: An Informal Meal

Have the staff and consumers join your group members in an informal meal.

Exercise 6: Follow-up

Have the staff and consumers invite the group members back and ask group members to make specific arrangements to return. Have the group members share their appreciation with the staff and consumers for the visit.

Exercise 7: How Did You Like the Visit?

In a private room ask the group members how they are feeling on the Feeling Thermometer. Ask the group members what they liked about the agency. Discuss what the visit meant to them. Give out tokens for good feedback. For homework ask the group what other community resources they would like to visit.

THE END OF SESSION 22